

Renewal

The sky is a soft gray and the temperature is in the low 50s. A gentle breeze stirs the budding lilac bush outside my window. There are no threats of snowfall or downpours. Spring is opening up its box of paints and bringing color back to the Pacific Northwest. It is official: I survived another winter.

Yet, instead of delighting in the bright green shoots poking from the ground and flowers painted a riot of pastel colors I feel an urge to cocoon. Frolicking among the flowering fairy bells and larkspur does not appeal to me. I want to withdraw from the outside world and renew myself.

One warning sign that tells me it's time to retreat and take what I call "comfort time," is that I feel disconnected from my core self. By that I mean who I am when my roles as wife, mother, friend and worker are stripped away.

Alone time is a rarity in my life and sometimes I forget to tune into the still voice of my intuition. Now that I stop and listen, I realize just how low my internal energy gauge is running. Long hours at work and the daily barrage of negative news from around the world has left me feeling depleted. It is time to slow down my level of activity and refill my internal reservoir.

Unfortunately, my growing awareness of the need to be alone coincides with a monthly social gathering I had been looking forward to for weeks. It is a chance to catch up with friends and enjoy a gourmet potluck.

Because I enjoy these regular get-togethers, I initially ignore the inner voice suggesting I skip the gathering and instead claim time for myself. But over the course of a few hours the urge increases. An internal argument rages about the pros and cons of attending the gather vs. spending time alone. After all, my family and friends are expecting me to attend. How can I just skip it?

As the gathering's afternoon start time draws near, I implement my tried and true litmus test. First, I imagine attending



Everyday Spirituality

by Colleen Foye Bollen

the gathering and internally gauge how it would feel to attend. Then I picture myself staying home and tune into how that would feel. In my mind I weigh the two experiences. When I picture myself being around people at the gathering, I feel a sense of discomfort and agitation in my gut. Imagining myself at home alone fills me with a sense of calmness.

At that moment I realize it is more important to get reacquainted with myself than gather with my friends and family. Staking my claim on quiet time, I explain to my family why I won't be joining them at the gathering. Thankfully, they support my decision.

Once the house is empty I settle into my cocoon. When

the phone rings, I let calls go straight through to voice mail. I ignore chores that need doing and e-mails waiting to be answered. I withdraw inward and focus on me.

Comfort time is an opportunity to spoil myself. To do exactly what I want to do,

when I want to do it. I take pleasure in chanting the word comfort. It sounds so restful. I have no idea how a dictionary would define it and I don't care.

I like to think of my hours of comforting alone time as an adult version of a time out. I am temporarily removing myself from social interactions. The big difference is that instead of having the time out inflicted upon me by someone else, it is something I claim for myself.

I relish my cocooning time. After four hours of reconnecting with myself and enjoying my own company, I am happy to see my family return from the gathering. Having satisfied my need to be alone, I am

ready to hear stories about their outings and listen to tales from the outside world. Read more renewal and comfort time at <http://flowingstillness.blogspot.com>.

Colleen Foye Bollen is a healing arts practitioner offering Jin Shin Jyutsu and other healing modalities. For information visit www.floatingstillness.com or call (206) 367-0491. In May 2009 Colleen is teaching two classes: a workshop on *Everyday Spirituality* and an introduction to *Jin Shin Jyutsu* at the University of Washington Women's center. See www.depts.washington.edu/womenctr for details.

Puppy Mills, Part 2

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The multiple breeds and the long line of people showing up to buy puppies were a big clue.

There is so much more to say about this and so little space. Because of that, here are two websites that provide a ton of free information

about buying a purebred dog: www.humanesociety.org/puppy and www.puppybuyerinfo.com (AKC).

Martha Norwalk is an animal behavior therapist and host of *Martha Norwalk's Animal World*, Sunday mornings, from 9 a.m. to noon on *Alternative Talk AM*

1150. She can be reached at *Martha's Canine, Feline and All Creature Counseling* at (206) 525-2016 or www.marthanorwalk.com. For a free, no obligation telephone evaluation or to make an appointment for Martha to work with you and your animal friend, give her a call. Meet her at www.videovillageonline.com.

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